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SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: HIGHER TOLLS AND LONGER DELAYS CHARACTERIZE  
TRAVEL IN REBEL-CONTROLLED NORTH

11. Summary: Preliminary data collected by the West African Trade Hub on the Ouagadougou-Abidjan transportation corridor portray a divided country. The Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) demand approximately 2/3 more money than the Government of Cote d'Ivoire (GOCI) for permits and bribes on sections of the route they control. Additionally, delays in the north can be significantly longer than those transporters face in the south. Data provided by commercial drivers and collected by the Trade Hub in coming months should provide post with a valuable metric to track reunification after seven years of northern autonomy. End Summary.

The Ouagadougou-Abidjan Corridor

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12. Embassy representatives recently met with Accra-based USAID contractors Patrick Kpenou and Amadou Ba, who reported their completion of an initial survey of the Ouagadougou-Abidjan corridor for the Improved Road Transport Initiative being conducted under the auspices of the West Africa Trade Hub. The survey consisted of Mr. Kpenou actually accompanying a legal truck on the route and recording all the bribes, fees and checkpoints along the way. An LES from the RSO office accompanied him during parts of the survey.

13. Laleraba/Lolobo/Abidjan: After crossing the frontier from Burkina Faso at Laleraba, the vehicles and drivers were processed through Forces Nouvelles immigration and customs. Drivers purchased a FAFN Ticket de Convoyage for the equivalent in local currency of USD 289, which was supposed to allow the driver to pass through checkpoints along the approximately 500 kilometers of FAFN-controlled route as well as the 236 kilometers of GOCI-controlled route without paying bribes. Leaving Laleraba, the truck was stopped at 19 checkpoints, where the driver paid the equivalent of USD 78 in bribes before reaching the government controlled village of Lolobo. During the 236-kilometer trip in the GOCI-controlled area from Lolobo to Abidjan, the driver was stopped at 10 additional checkpoints and paid the equivalent of USD 44 in bribes. The rebel-controlled segment of the journey cost USD 367 and passed through 19 checkpoints that resulted in delays of more than two hours; in contrast, the government-controlled portion of the route cost about USD 44 and passed through 10 checkpoints, resulting in 54 minutes of delays.

14. Abidjan/Lolobo/Laleraba: Before leaving the port of Abidjan, the drivers again purchased a Ticket de Convoyage, this time from Ivoirian Customs for the equivalent of USD 222. Despite the guarantee of free passage on the GOCI-controlled segments of the trip, the truckers were stopped at 12 checkpoints, paid the equivalent of USD 27 in bribes, and were delayed for about two and a half hours. In Forces Nouvelles controlled sections of the

route, the trip cost USD 129 in bribes that were paid at 19 checkpoints. The vehicle was also delayed almost 18 hours en route from Lolobo to the Burkina Faso frontier.

15. Surveyors noted that checkpoints in FAFN-controlled zones were typically manned by 6 - 15 soldiers attired in a variety of uniforms and carrying a mix of light weapons. In contrast, in the government sectors, interagency teams composed of uniformed National Police, Customs, Gendarme, Forestry Police and Anti-Drug Police manned the checkpoints. The drivers paid each service separately, with the highest percentage of bribes going to Customs officials and the lowest to the Forestry Police. HUB Transportation expert Patrick Kpenou remarked that it was like traveling in two different countries.

#### The Next Steps

16. Based on the initial survey, a form was designed for legal drivers to collect data when they travel the corridor. Hub Officials estimated that approximately 200 legal trucks a day

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travel the corridor. (Note: Based on prior experience in West Africa, Hub officials remarked that only slightly more than half of the trucks on the road are legal. End Note.) At the conclusion of each trip, forms will be collected and the information collated. The information will be disseminated periodically to government officials and non-governmental organizations in an effort to eliminate barriers, delays and bribes along the route. Mr. Kpenou said that while corruption and delays are endemic to the transport industry in West Africa, the disparities between the north and south in Cote d'Ivoire are unusual because they occur within a single state.

17. Embassy Comment: As data is compiled in the coming months, we will monitor HUB reports for indicators that the central government is re-establishing control in the north. Key indicators we anticipate include:

- Re-establishment of the presence of uniformed Immigration and Customs officials at the border crossing at Laleraba;
  - Harmonization between FAFN and GOCI Tickets de Convoyage issued at Laleraba and Port of Abidjan, respectively, in terms of prices and forms;
  - The presence of uniformed officials representing the National Police, Customs, Gendarmes, Forest Police and Anti-Drug Police at all checkpoints; and
  - A reduction in delays in the currently FAFN-controlled regions of the country. End comment.
- STANLEY